

RETAIL PRICES - JUNE QUARTER, 1954.The "C" Series Index Numbers.

Index numbers of retail prices ("C" Series) for the June quarter of 1954 (with the weighted average of the six capital cities in 1923-1927 as base of 1,000) were as shown below.

"C" Series Retail Price Index Numbers and Percentage Increases^a, June Quarter, 1954.

City.	Index Number.	Increase from Year Ended June, 1939.	Increase from June Quarter, 1953.	Increase from March Quarter, 1954.
		%	%	%
Brisbane ..	2,163	150.6	2.3	-1.1
Toowoomba ..	2,197	158.2	2.2	-0.3
Rockhampton ..	2,215	157.3	3.2	-0.3
Townsville ..	2,288	150.9	2.7	-0.7
Bundaberg ..	2,163	157.2	2.6	0.2
Warwick ..	2,180	165.2	2.3	-

a Minus (-) indicates decrease.

The trend towards more stable prices which became apparent at the beginning of 1952 culminated in decreases in the "C" Series index numbers in the June quarter of 1954 in four of the six Queensland cities for which the index numbers are computed. The fall was most in Brisbane where a decrease of 1.1 per cent. was recorded - the largest quarterly decrease for over twenty years. A general reduction in metropolitan meat prices was the cause of the larger decrease in Brisbane.

The combined index number for Queensland (weighted average for the "five towns") decreased from 2,197 in the March quarter to 2,177 in the June quarter of 1954, which was equivalent to a fall of 0.9 per cent. This followed a rise of 0.6 per cent. in the previous three months. Brisbane recorded a decrease of 1.1 per cent., and Townsville a decrease of 0.7 per cent. The other four cities showed almost stable prices, two recording small downward movements, and one a small upward movement, while in one prices were unchanged.

Brisbane and Townsville showed the greatest decreases in food and grocery prices, but all cities recorded falls in this section, which was the principal factor contributing to the lower combined "C" Series index number for Queensland towns. Clothing and footwear prices remained relatively stable, four cities showing small decreases, one a small increase, and one unchanged prices. Miscellaneous items, as with clothing and footwear, showed decreases in four cities, an increase in one, and stable prices in one, though not in the corresponding cities. Rent was fairly stable in all cities except Bundaberg where there was an increase of 6.9 per cent.

The total increase in the "C" Series index number for Brisbane over the twelve months ended 30th June, 1954, was 2.3 per cent., compared with 2.5 per cent. for the corresponding twelve months in 1952-53, and 21.6 per cent. in the twelve months ended 30th June, 1952.

Percentage changes during the last quarter and since 1938-39 in food and groceries, clothing and footwear, and miscellaneous items are shown in the following table.

Retail Prices, Percentage Increases^a, June Quarter, 1954.

City.	Food and Groceries.		Clothing and Footwear.		Miscellaneous Items.	
	From Year Ended June, 1939.	From March Quarter, 1954.	From Year Ended June, 1939.	From March Quarter, 1954.	From Year Ended June, 1939.	From March Quarter, 1954.
	%	%	%	%	%	%
Brisbane ..	185.0	-2.6	276.0	-	108.4	-0.3
Toowoomba ..	206.9	-0.7	274.9	-0.6	107.6	0.1
Rockhampton ..	187.5	-0.7	265.6	-0.1	117.8	-
Townsville ..	179.2	-1.4	272.5	-0.2	117.6	-0.5
Bundaberg ..	181.7	-0.5	267.2	-0.4	104.4	-0.1
Warwick ..	200.4	-0.3	277.2	0.5	113.2	-0.2

a Minus (-) indicates decrease.

Food and Groceries.

The decrease of 2.6 per cent. recorded in the Brisbane food and groceries index number for June quarter, 1954, was the first decrease recorded since December quarter, 1952, when this index fell by 1.9 per cent. Principal items in which changes in price occurred in Brisbane were meat and potatoes which decreased in price, and milk, eggs, and bacon which increased. The decreases in the other five cities for which the index numbers are calculated were not as large as in Brisbane, chiefly because meat prices did not decrease in those cities. Townsville's decrease was larger than those in the other provincial cities because the winter increase in the price of milk granted in the other cities did not apply to Townsville.

Clothing and Miscellaneous.

Only small movements were recorded in the index numbers for these sections during the recent quarter. Small variations occurred in the prices of some individual items, but most of the items included in these sections did not change in price.

Rent (4 and 5 Roomed Houses).

The rent index remained stationary in Townsville and Warwick, and increased in Brisbane, Toowoomba, and Rockhampton by 0.1 per cent., 1.3 per cent., and 0.7 per cent., respectively. An increase of 6.9 per cent. in the rent index for Bundaberg was largely responsible for the "C" Series index for that city registering an increase for the quarter.

Comparison of Costs in Queensland Cities.

The following table shows the amounts, for the various Queensland cities, required in June quarter, 1954, to purchase the quantity of goods or housing which would have cost £1 in Brisbane.

Amounts Required in Various Cities to Purchase Equivalent of £1 in Brisbane.

City.	All Groups.			Food and Groceries.			Rent (4 and 5 Rooms).			Clothing and Footwear.			Miscellaneous Items.		
	£	s.	d.	£	s.	d.	£	s.	d.	£	s.	d.	£	s.	d.
Brisbane ..	1	0	0	1	0	0	1	0	0	1	0	0	1	0	0
Toowoomba ..	1	0	3 $\frac{3}{4}$	1	0	5 $\frac{3}{4}$	1	0	4 $\frac{1}{4}$	19	11	1 $\frac{1}{4}$	1	0	7 $\frac{1}{4}$
Rockhampton ..	1	0	5 $\frac{3}{4}$	1	1	1	18	11	1 $\frac{1}{2}$	19	9	3 $\frac{3}{4}$	1	1	3
Townsville ..	1	1	1 $\frac{3}{4}$	1	1	10 $\frac{1}{4}$	1	0	7	1	0	1	1	1	10 $\frac{3}{4}$
Bundaberg ..	1	0	0	1	0	10 $\frac{1}{4}$	16	8	2	19	9	1 $\frac{1}{4}$	1	0	5 $\frac{1}{4}$
Warwick ..	1	0	2	1	0	10	16	0		19	11	1 $\frac{1}{2}$	1	1	6 $\frac{3}{4}$

In relation to Brisbane, the prices of all groups together increased during the recent quarter in each of the provincial cities for which the index numbers are calculated. The largest variation in these relative prices occurred in Bundaberg, where the amount required to purchase goods costing £1 in Brisbane rose from 19s. 8 $\frac{3}{4}$ d. during March quarter to £1 during June quarter.

The prices of food and groceries in each of the five provincial cities for which data are collected are higher than in Brisbane, and during the recent quarter their excess over Brisbane prices increased for the second successive quarter. Townsville prices were dearest, and food and groceries which would have cost £1 in Brisbane cost £1 1s. 10 $\frac{1}{4}$ d. in that city, followed by Rockhampton where £1 1s. 1d. would have been needed to purchase the same amount of goods. The largest increase occurred in Warwick (5 $\frac{3}{4}$ d. in the £) where £1 0s. 10d. would have been required to buy food and groceries costing £1 in Brisbane.

Clothing and footwear prices in all five provincial cities are closer to Brisbane prices than the prices of other items, and during June quarter were slightly cheaper than in Brisbane in all of the towns covered by the survey except Townsville, where an additional penny would have been needed to purchase clothing and footwear costing £1 in Brisbane.

Miscellaneous items were substantially more expensive in all five provincial cities than in Brisbane. Bundaberg and Toowoomba prices were closest to Brisbane, the additional costs in these cities being 5 $\frac{1}{4}$ d. and 7 $\frac{1}{4}$ d., respectively, in the £. In the other three cities the margins over Brisbane prices have become greater during the last two years, and, in the recent quarter, the extra costs of items in this group costing £1 in Brisbane were 1s. 10 $\frac{3}{4}$ d. in Townsville, 1s. 6 $\frac{3}{4}$ d. in Warwick, and 1s. 3d. in Rockhampton. Electricity, gas, and firewood are important in this group.

Commonwealth and State Basic Wage Rates.

The Commonwealth Court of Conciliation and Arbitration has suspended automatic ("cost of living") adjustments since the adjustment which operated from 1st August, 1953.

State Industrial Courts in New South Wales, South Australia, and Western Australia have not made any basic wage adjustments since their declarations following the publication of index numbers for the June quarter of 1953. In Victoria, where wages are determined by Wages Boards, special legislation required the continuation of the automatic adjustment of wage rates in accordance with variations in retail price index numbers. Variations in the Melbourne index numbers since June quarter, 1953, have caused a net increase of 1s. (which included a decrease of 1s. in the latest quarter) in the basic rate for males. In Tasmania, where rates are also controlled by Wages Boards, an adjustment of 10s. which operated after the publication of the September quarter index numbers early in November was cancelled from 9th December, and the rates remain at their August 1953 level.

In Queensland, the State Industrial Court, after the publication of the September quarter index numbers, increased the basic wage by 3s. for males and 2s. for females, and, following the publication of the December quarter index numbers, a further increase of 3s. for males and 2s. for females was made. The Court considered that the changes in the index numbers in the March and June quarters of 1954 did not indicate a significant economic trend and no basic wage adjustment has been made since 1st February, 1954.

Retail Prices and Basic Wage Rates.Australian Capital Cities.

Capital City.	Retail Price Index ("C" Series).			Commonwealth Basic Wage.		State Basic Wage.			
	June Qtr., 1953.	March Qtr., 1954.	June Qtr., 1954.	Males. ^a		Males.	Females.	Date of Operation.	
				£	s.	d.	£	s.	d.
Brisbane	2,115	2,187	2,163	10	18	0	11	5	0
Sydney	2,360	2,391	2,373	12	3	0	12	3	0
Melbourne	2,279	2,301	2,295	11	15	0	b	b	-
Adelaide	2,238	2,260	2,265	11	11	0	11	11	0
Perth	2,290	2,348	2,475	11	16	0	12	6	6
Hobart	2,351	2,437	2,402	12	2	0	b	b	-

a The female rates are 75 per cent. of the male rates.

b No State wage declared. The rate fixed by the Commonwealth Court has usually been followed to a large extent.

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BRISBANE.

9th August, 1954.

Table 1 - The "C" Series Retail Prices Index.

(Base: Weighted Average of Six Capital Cities, 1923-1927 = 1,000.)

City.	Year Ended June, 1939.	Year Ended June, 1946.	Year Ended June, 1954.	Quarter Ended -				
				June, 1953.	Sept., 1953.	Dec., 1953.	March, 1954.	June, 1954.
Brisbane ..	863	1,079	2,167	2,115	2,143	2,176	2,187	2,163
Toowoomba ..	851	1,092	2,192	2,149	2,172	2,193	2,204	2,197
Rockhampton ..	861	1,084	2,204	2,146	2,177	2,202	2,221	2,215
Townsville ..	912	1,119	2,280	2,228	2,251	2,277	2,304	2,288
Bundaberg ..	841	1,059	2,145	2,109	2,121	2,137	2,158	2,163
Weighted Average								
Five Towns ..	864	1,082	2,178	2,127	2,154	2,184	2,197	2,177
Warwick ..	822	1,073	2,169	2,130	2,147	2,168	2,180	2,180

Table 2 - Food and Groceries Retail Prices Index.

(Base: Weighted Average of Six Capital Cities, 1923-1927 = 1,000.)

City.	Year Ended June, 1939.	Year Ended June, 1946.	Year Ended June, 1954.	Quarter Ended -				
				June, 1953.	Sept., 1953.	Dec., 1953.	March, 1954.	June, 1954.
Brisbane ..	856	971	2,465	2,372	2,429	2,488	2,504	2,440
Toowoomba ..	814	1,010	2,498	2,426	2,481	2,496	2,516	2,498
Rockhampton ..	895	1,012	2,551	2,443	2,494	2,547	2,591	2,573
Townsville ..	955	1,057	2,660	2,568	2,609	2,660	2,703	2,666
Bundaberg ..	903	1,027	2,530	2,446	2,498	2,521	2,557	2,544
Weighted Average								
Five Towns ..	864	984	2,489	2,396	2,452	2,506	2,526	2,472
Warwick ..	846	1,000	2,528	2,444	2,497	2,523	2,549	2,541

Table 3 - Clothing and Footwear Retail Prices Index.

(Base: Weighted Average of Six Capital Cities, 1923-1927 = 1,000.)

City.	Year Ended June, 1939.	Year Ended June, 1946.	Year Ended June, 1954.	Quarter Ended -				
				June, 1953.	Sept., 1953.	Dec., 1953.	March, 1954.	June, 1954.
Brisbane ..	829	1,454	3,115	3,104	3,116	3,110	3,117	3,117
Toowoomba ..	829	1,429	3,118	3,133	3,123	3,114	3,127	3,108
Rockhampton ..	845	1,477	3,096	3,100	3,115	3,089	3,092	3,089
Townsville ..	840	1,457	3,138	3,130	3,160	3,129	3,134	3,129
Bundaberg ..	839	1,447	3,097	3,154	3,121	3,092	3,094	3,081
Weighted Average								
Five Towns ..	831	1,454	3,115	3,109	3,119	3,110	3,116	3,114
Warwick ..	825	1,441	3,099	3,113	3,098	3,090	3,095	3,112